



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

17 JAN 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
UNDER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE RESEARCH AND ENGINEERING
GENERAL COUNSEL
INSPECTOR GENERAL

SUBJECT: DOD Policy on Blinding Lasers

The statement below should replace the policy statement issued 29 August 1995.

The Department of Defense prohibits the use of lasers specifically designed to cause permanent blindness and supports negotiations to prohibit the use of such weapons. However, laser systems are absolutely vital to our modern military. Among other things, they are currently used for detection, targeting, range-finding, communications and target destruction. They provide a critical technological edge to US forces and allow our forces to fight, win and survive on an increasingly lethal battlefield. In addition, lasers provide significant humanitarian benefits. They allow weapon systems to be increasingly discriminate, thereby reducing collateral damage to civilian lives and property. The Department of Defense recognizes that accidental or incidental eye injuries may occur on the battlefield as the result of the use of lasers not specifically designed to cause permanent blindness. Therefore, we continue to strive, through training and doctrine, to minimize these injuries.

William J. Perry